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Pollard Expected to Plead Guilty

Agreement Is Reached in Israeli Intelligence Case, Sources Say

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U.S. officials have worked out a tentative agreement in which accused spy Jonathan Jay Pollard would plead guilty today in connection with his arrest last year for allegedly selling classified U.S. government documents to the Israelis, sources familiar with the case said yesterday.

A court hearing in the Pollard case has been tentatively scheduled for today before U.S. District Court Judge Aubrey Robinson. A spokesman for the U.S. attorney's office declined to explain the hearing's purpose or make any further comment.

Sources said the plea agreement in the politically sensitive case was nearly resolved. All that remained, they said, was working out last-minute details that were not expected to derail months of extensive negotiations between federal prosecutors and attorneys for Pollard and his wife, Anne Henderson-Pollard, who is also charged in the case.

Under the agreement, Pollard, 31, a former civilian Navy counter-intelligence analyst, would plead guilty to what was described as a "serious" espionage charge, and his wife would be allowed to plead to a

lesser charge, said the sources. They declined to specify the charges.

Sources said the federal investigation has uncovered new information that implicates an Israeli air force official in the alleged espionage operation, as well as others whose identities were not disclosed. The sources said others are likely to be charged in the case.

Pollard was arrested outside the Israeli Embassy Nov. 21 during an unsuccessful attempt to seek political asylum and was charged with selling U.S. military secrets, an offense that carries a maximum penalty of life in prison. Henderson-Pollard, 26, has been charged with unauthorized possession of classified documents, for which she could receive a maximum sentence of 10 years in prison and a \$10,000 fine.

A negotiated plea would avoid a trial that might further strain relations between the United States and Israel, a key U.S. ally in the Middle East.

The Israeli Embassy here released a statement during the weekend labeling as "baseless" recent news reports that the embassy said suggested a "widespread espionage operation by Israel in the United States."

One U.S. official said yesterday that the Israeli air force official is

expected to be cited in the Pollard court proceedings along with others implicated. The official described the Israeli official as Pollard's "case officer."

U.S. diplomats, who recently have provided the Israeli government with new details uncovered by the investigation, are eager to learn Israel's account of the air force official's actions, the source said.

The Israeli Embassy statement said that "the government of Israel reiterates that in accordance with the agreement reached in December 1985 between Israel and the United States, full cooperation regarding the Pollard affair has been and is continuing . . ."

Sources said that the new information emerged largely after Pollard began cooperating with federal authorities as part of his effort to negotiate a plea.

Under such plea agreements, prosecutors generally outline the case to the judge. Just how much information should be made public in the Pollard case has been the subject of sensitive negotiations between Justice Department officials and State Department officials concerned about the case's diplomatic impact, sources said.

Staff writer Don Oberdorfer contributed to this report.